

Diocesan News

March 2024

Revd Ian will ride and run 75 miles to mark the diocese's 10th Anniversary



One of our clergy is hopping on his bike, then jumping into running shoes for a 75 mile sponsored odyssey to mark the diocese's 10th Anniversary this April.

Revd Canon Ian Greenhalgh, Area Dean for the Bowland and Ewecross Deanery will ride and run across the Ripon and Bradford Areas and hopes to raise funds to help support our churches.

His goal is to arrive at Bradford Cathedral on Saturday, April 20 in time for a special anniversary service attended by Most Revd Stephen Cottrell, Archbishop of York.

"When I had my 75th birthday in January and thought about upcoming the 10th Anniversary of the Diocese of Leeds, I felt inspired to challenge my fitness levels and to raise money for the Church I love to serve," Ian said.

"Therefore on Friday, April 19, my son Tom and I will cycle 50 miles from Settle Parish Church to Ripon Cathedral. We will pass on churches in Burnsall, Appletreewick and Pateley Bridge on the way.

"We plan to begin the bike ride at 9am and to arrive in Ripon at lunchtime – hopefully people might give us a wave as we pass and maybe the odd cup of tea!

"On Saturday, April 20, we will begin a 25 mile walk and jog along the Leeds and Liverpool canal, starting at Gargrave Parish Church, and passing churches in Skipton, Bradley, Kildwick, Silsden, Riddlesden and Saltaire before finishing at Bradford Cathedral. We plan to leave Gargrave at 9am and arrive at the Cathedral by 2pm."

Ian hopes to be joined by friends and volunteers along the route and all are welcome to join him and Tom for as little or as far as they wish.

Leeds Minster hosts a Chinese New Year Fair for everyone

The Chinese Year of the Dragon began with a lively Lunar New Year Fair, held for the first time at Leeds Minster and which attracted some 900 visitors.

The historic building was packed with stalls, food and welcome guests from local churches with Cantonese-speaking people, many of whom have arrived from Hong Kong recently. Canon Paul Maybury, Rector of Leeds City, said the inaugural had been a great success:

"It was a great joy for Leeds Minster to host our first Lunar New Year fair.

"It was an excellent use of our space and facilities and a pleasure to support the various churches in the city serving the Cantonese-speaking community."



Shared prayer for peace

Bishop Toby

As we continue our Lenten journey with Jesus in the way of the cross, Muslim friends, colleagues and neighbours are beginning their fast this month. Each year, the lunar month of Ramadan starts ten or eleven days earlier, and the overlapping of our annual periods of spiritual discipline offers opportunities to share with and pray for each other.

Christian and Jewish dates for Easter and Pesach also fluctuate each year, with Easter Sunday falling on 31st March and the Jewish observance of Passover starting on 22nd April.

Many Muslims and Jews approach their observances this year feeling vulnerable. Incidents of both antisemitic and Islamophobic hatred have risen sharply since Hamas' murderous attacks of October 7 last year led to Israel's brutal invasion of Gaza. The House of Bishops has called for an immediate ceasefire along with the release of all remaining hostages and an end to Hamas' missile attacks on Israel. The devastation of Gaza and the killing of so many Palestinian civilians there, said the House, cannot be morally justified. The bishops also condemned all antisemitic and anti-Muslim sentiment and committed our church to work alongside others for the common good, despite our differences.



Jesus said in the Beatitudes, "Blessed are the peace-makers." As the Revd Jenny Ramsden, our Diocesan Interfaith Adviser, reflects, we often think of peace as an 'absence of war'. But Jesus implies that peace is something that we need to actively create and build. Many people from different faith backgrounds, including clergy and lay leaders from this diocese are doing this hard work of building peace in our communities. This work is not made easier by rhetoric from some politicians and media, and the recent government decision to cut funding to the national Inter Faith Forum causing it to shut down is short-sighted and regrettable. But many stories of costly peace-making, not least in our schools, are inspirational.

We have an opportunity this Lent to pray for and to reach out especially to Jewish and Muslim colleagues, friends and neighbours. They and we may disagree strongly and emotionally about events in Israel Palestine, but holding on to one another across these differences is a calling from our Lord.

Muslim Council of Britain's Zara Mohammed talks faith with Bishop Tony

The first woman Secretary General of the Muslim Council of Britain joined Bishop Tony in conversation at Halifax Minster as part of its new Festival of Faith. The festival is aims to make the traditional festival of Lent as accessible to as many people as possible and features a series of public conversations on wide-ranging topics.

"It was a great joy and privilege to spend an hour in dialogue with Zara Mohammed, the first women Secretary General of the Muslim Council of Britain," said the Rt Revd Tony Robinson, Bishop of Wakefield.

"She is a pioneer and role model for young Muslim women. We were able to discuss the situation in Israel and Gaza and the withdrawal of funding by the present government for the Inter Faith Network which has been at the forefront of inter faith relationship for over forty years."



New resources for parishes to help with church buildings



The Diocese of Leeds is pleased to have extra resources to help churches with their buildings, thanks to a successful funding application with the Church of England.

Because of some £9 million allocated by the Church Commissioners as part of a national Buildings for Mission Fund, the diocese is able to offer new help to our parishes, with our expanded Diocesan Church Buildings Grant Scheme.

The Grant Scheme aims to support parishes with maintaining and improving their church buildings as vital centres of worship, community, and mission.

Initially a five year scheme offering some £80,000 a year to churches, this year we have been given some £272,000 to expand the amount available to our parishes.

These grants are for churches across the diocese to do minor repairs; projects which will improve the functionality of our buildings for missional purposes; and projects that reduce the environmental impact of our buildings, as we aim to meet the Church of England's 2030 carbon net-zero target.

In addition, because of funding from the Church Commissioners, we are able to employ a new Church Buildings Support Officer, Alena-Rose Douglas.

In our diocese this role is focused on providing bespoke, tailored, ongoing support for selected parish churches, following the priorities of our Barnabas: Encouraging Confidence initiative .

It is intended that the parishes Alena-Rose works with should be able to take what they learn and offer support and advice to other parishes, to share the learning from projects in a practical way.

Alena-Rose said: "A project that I'm particularly excited to be involved with is a pilot scheme for a maintenance collective.

"The aim is to work together across a geographic area (in this case a deanery) to make the regular care and maintenance of church buildings easier, trying to make best use of the resources we have, both in terms of money and people.

"The support and enthusiasm from the volunteers involved in this project is fantastic, even though it is still in very early stages of planning.

"I am very optimistic for its future!"

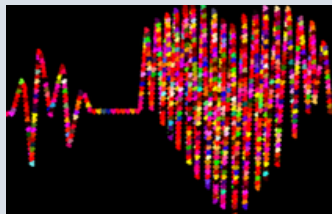
These time-limited additional support measures supplement the ongoing work of our DAC, who remain available to advise and help all parishes around church building projects.

Daily devotions between Easter and Pentecost to mark diocesan 10th anniversary

As part of marking the 10th anniversary of the Diocese of Leeds, people will be able to receive an email devotion every day between Easter and Pentecost.

During the 50 days from Easter to Pentecost, people in the diocese and beyond can subscribe to receive a daily email with stories, reflections, prayers and more.

Each email will include a reflection written by different people from all across our diocese. The Revd Canon Andrew Norman, Director of Ministry and Mission for the diocese, said: "As we journey through the Book of Acts, every reflection will be linked to one of the areas of focus in our Rhythm of Life initiative: encourage, share, create, pray, rest, celebrate, reflect. "There will also be ideas for activities and links to good news stories."



Festivals of Spring

Revd Dave Ho Young
Vicar, St Barnabas
Alwoodley

There are two festivals I celebrate every spring. One is of course Easter, which we celebrate this month. The other is Chinese New Year, which we celebrated last month, and which in China is called Spring Festival. Falling on the first new moon between 21 January and 20 February, this ancient festival marks the end of winter and the beginning of spring, and in Chinese culture is associated with hope and expectation for the year ahead.

While the Lunar New Year is not a Christian festival, for Chinese Christians there are plenty of traditions that we can reinterpret or understand in the light of Jesus and through the prism of the Easter story.

Chinese characters which form couplets on red paper adorn the sides of people's doorways, and reminds us of the Exodus from Egypt when the blood of the Passover lamb was painted on the doorframes of the Israelites.

Red envelopes containing money is given to children at



New Year, which for Christians reminds us of the free gift of Jesus' salvation given to us through the shedding of his blood. Homes are cleaned from top to bottom at Spring Festival, originally to bring good luck but for Christians this reminds us of Jesus washing away our sins. Finally, new clothes are worn on Chinese New Year, which for us is a reminder of being clothed with Christ when we become Christians.

Jesus' death and resurrection is the foundation of our faith. Without the cross and without the empty tomb there is no forgiveness for sins and there is no new life. As we celebrate Easter in a few weeks we are reminded once again of the hope that can only be found in Jesus. At Lunar New Year there is a Chinese character 福 that is often hung upside down in people's homes. It means 'blessing' and hung upside down it signifies blessing being poured out. This Easter may God's blessings of new life and hope in Christ be poured out in your life afresh.

Yorkshire Historic Churches Trust have grants for our churches

Churches in our diocese will be able to benefit from grants from the Yorkshire Historic Churches Trust (YHCT), who are welcoming funding applications from churches across the county for repair, restoration and maintenance work.

Due to donations and legacies received last year, the Trust is actively encouraging churches to apply for the next round of funding.

Sally Firth, Churchwarden at Holy Trinity Church in Cookridge recently went through the application process, and said: "The application form was short and simple to complete, with relevant straightforward questions.

"The assessment visit was a chance for us talk through our application and let the assessors see the work that needed undertaking.

"We were also able to show the work we had already undertaken and talk about our plans for the future.

"I would encourage anyone looking for funding to put forward an application".

